

BOOK REVIEW

Cryptozoology: Interdisciplinary Journal of the International Society of Cryptozoology, edited by J. Richard Greenwell. Membership at \$25/year is available from Secretary-Treasurer of ISC, Box 43070, Tucson, Arizona 85733. Includes *Cryptozoology* annually and *The ISC Newsletter* quarterly.

The rear cover of volume one states, "The International Society of Cryptozoology serves as a focal point for the investigation, analysis, publication, and discussion of all matters related to animals of unexpected form or size, or unexpected occurrence in time or space. The Society also serves as a forum for public discussion and

education, and for providing reliable information to appropriate authorities."

Do we really need another journal? Apparently so, for I cannot imagine established scientific journals such as *Copeia*, *Journal of Mammalogy* or *Science* publishing articles based on hearsay and negative results as does volume one of *Cryptozoology*.

The officers and board of directors of the new society contain names familiar to readers of fringe zoology. Bernard Heuvelmans, French author of *On the Track of Unknown Animals*, is president, and Roy Mackal of Loch Ness fame is vice president. Of the 12 board members, 6 are overseas and many have substantial scientific reputations such as Grover Krantz,

anthropologist and Bigfoot expert; George Zug, herpetologist at the U.S. National Museum, and Phillip Tobias, anatomist-anthropologist in South Africa. There is an 8-member editorial board including 2 prominent ichthyologists, C. Levett Smith and Eugenie Clark.

"What is cryptozoology?" is the title of the lead article in volume one. Cryptozoology, as defined by Heuvelmans, is the science of "hidden" animals. By "hidden" he means undescribed by science. Heuvelmans compared cryptozoology to paleontology and said that "cryptozoological reconstructions are no more fantastic or illegitimate than those of paleontology." He seems to think that anecdotal testimonials of eyewitnesses are the equivalent of fossils. He also wrote that "... science bases itself essentially on reason" then added, "This certainly does not mean... that nonrational knowledge should be ignored and neglected." How knowledge can be arrived at without reason is not explained.

Other articles in the first volume relate "The Status of Wildman Research in China" accompanied by an interesting photograph of hairy primate hands said to be from a large unknown monkey species. Robert Rines reviewed 10 years of searching at Loch Ness with claims of sonar contact with "large animate objects." Anthropologist Roy Wagner recounted mermaid legends of Papua New Guinea natives and insisted the creatures are not dugongs which the natives can readily identify. An article by Henry Bauer reported that only 13% of adult Americans think that the Loch Ness monster actually exists. Bauer said this skeptical view is at variance with "informed" opinion.

There are 2 articles on the Mokele-Mbembe, the supposed dinosaur still inhabiting Central African swamp forests. Mackal and others described an expedition to find this sauropod, but no evidence resulted. Mackal et al. reported this as "non-probative evidence... was found." The other article attempts to analyze the fruit from the liana *Landolphia*

as a food source for this creature of unknown size, eating habits, and classification; a task the authors admit is difficult. No conclusions were reached. A couple of gratuitous formulae were added for good measure to make the paper seem scientific. The whole endeavor reminded me of reading creationist literature.

An article by oceanographer P. H. LeBlond calculated the size of the Lake Champlain monster, known as Champ, at 4.8-17.2 m based on a snapshot of Champ and the length of wind waves. Volume one (100 pages) ends with reviews of 5 recent Sasquatch books.

There is a certain seductive appeal to the fact that the okapi, a 200 kg relative of the giraffe, remained unknown to science until 1900; or that living coelacanths, thought to be extinct for 65,000,000 years, were described in 1939; or that megamouth, a huge (750 kg) unknown oceanic shark, eluded notice until it became tangled in a navy sea anchor in 1976 off Hawaii. So why not Loch Ness monsters, Bigfoot, or dinosaurs in Africa? One smart aleck answer might be because okapis, coelacanths, and megamouth are real. All the searches in the world will produce no specimens of nonexistent beasts.

The various monster searches have many parallels with hunts for real, but rare, animals. Consider the ongoing search for the Tasmanian tiger, *Thylacinus cynocephalus*. The last known survivor of this species died in the Hobart Zoo in 1936, however many unsuccessful, elaborate expeditions have been mounted since then (Beresford and Bailey 1981) because eyewitnesses continue to report sightings or footprints. Some expeditions involve sophisticated electronic and photographic surveillance in areas of sightings. To date, no evidence of the continued existence of thylacines has been produced. At what point do we consider the absence of evidence to be the evidence of absence? Perhaps the old adage about the impossibility of proving a negative should be reconsidered (Pasquarello 1984).

The idea of a journal devoted to crypto-

zoology is a good one. However, if it is to survive and become more than a propaganda organ for the true believers, it must incorporate scientific rigor and a healthy dose of skepticism similar to the *Skeptical Inquirer's* attitude toward parapsychology. Most zoologists would be delighted if the Loch Ness monster, Bigfoot, etc. turned out to be real, but the bottom line must be "show us the specimens."

Volume 2 (171 p.) arrived while this review was in press. It is much more interesting and slightly less advocacy than volume 1. There is a useful, but incompletely referenced, article by Heuvelmans on the numbers of animals yet to be described. Anthropologist Frank Poirier and 2 Chinese co-authors suggest that the Wildman of China is the endangered golden monkey, *Rhinopithecus roxellanae*.

Linguist John Colarusso discussed the role of folklore as a source of data on relict hominoids and concluded that "... many more creatures lurk in the forests of the mind than in the forest of the real world."

G. Krantz, an unabashed believer in Bigfoot, presented a detailed analysis of friction ridges and sweat pores from casts of alleged Bigfoot tracks. He maintained that they could not have been hoaxed and

were made by a 400 kg, 2.5 m unknown hominid.

A 10-page field report by a Congolese biologist named Agnagna reported a sighting of Mokele-Mbembe. Mr. Agnagna claimed to have filmed the beast, but, alas, he had forgotten to remove the lens cover.

The mermaid people are at it again with new reports of the "Ri" from Papua New Guinea complete with out-of-focus photographs of blobs having zero information content.

After reviews of 6 books on crypto-zoological subjects, there are some interesting responses to articles that appeared in volume 1. Despite my skepticism, I must confess that this is the only journal, of the dozen or so that I receive, that I read from cover to cover. If it becomes more critically rigorous, I may be able to take it seriously.

LITERATURE CITED

- Beresford, Q. and G. Bailey 1981 Search for the Tasmanian tiger. Blubber Head Press, Hobart, Tasmania. 54 p.
Pasquarello, A. J. 1984 Proving negatives and the paranormal. *Skeptical Inquirer* 8: 259-270.

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ERRATUM

Figures 2 and 3 were reversed by the printer in Volume 84 (1): 51-54.